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NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY
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AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF 10TH CONGRESS ON PREVENTION OF CRIME AND THE TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS

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Mr. Chairman, it is well recognized that organized crime is a real and pressing problem for our societies. It has profound social and economic impacts. Insidious and pervasive, it affects the lives of each of us, directly or indirectly. It is a global and fluid force that slips across borders and uses these borders to better achieve its many purposes.

Manifestations of organized crime include drug-related violence, murder and bombings, the victimization of the elderly through telemarketing fraud, as well as credit card fraud, prostitution and the smuggling of migrants.

The true nature, extent and impact of organized crime are often invisible to the public. Even the illegal drug trade, where suppliers and users network in a far-reaching international web, can seem remote to many citizens.

Clearly, it is our responsibility as elected officials to help raise public awareness and to identify solutions that will help communities respond to and prevent organized crime.

Organized crime thrives on social and economic inequity. This means that the task of combating organized crime must not be left only to the criminal justice system. It is a task that must be shared broadly within society. Communities, social service agencies and the private sector must focus their attention on this problem. All have a role to play and must be part of a strategy that includes prevention.

It is critical that all of us work together to strengthen the security, and the economic and political systems in all countries so that the conditions which give rise to organized crime do not emerge. Nations cannot be expected to deal effectively with these growing problems alone.

With this thought in mind, let me turn now to the work underway at the international level on the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its related protocols on trafficking in humans, migration and firearms issues.

The scope of the various provisions in the Convention has been under discussion for some time. Canada believes that it is in our collective interest to have the Convention, and particularly its core

mutual legal assistance and extradition provisions, deal broadly with organized crime.

We take this position for very practical reasons. Canada believes such international cooperation is essential to tackle organized crime. Canada, for example, acknowledged this by enacting new extradition legislation in 1999, allowing for the surrender of persons to a variety of extradition partners and for a variety of offences.

We see broad cooperation as a matter of shared interest, and we do not want to lose the opportunity that the current negotiations present. We hope these negotiations will gain support for a wide basis of cooperation through extradition and mutual legal assistance.

Mr. Chairman, we must maintain our momentum and meet our agreed timetable, in elaborating the three protocols to the main Convention.

Canada is particularly proud of the lead role that we have been able to play in helping to co-ordinate work on the Firearms protocol, in cooperation with other countries. The Firearms protocol is essential to our human security.

The two migration-related protocols will give us the tools and international legal framework necessary to combat the smuggling and trafficking in humans.

There is still important work to be done. Nevertheless, we must remain committed to meeting our established deadline of year 2000 for the conclusion of negotiations on all four instruments.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to talk about some specific problems that we linked to organized crime. High-tech crime over the Internet and the use of telecommunications for illicit purposes are serious problems that grow with new advances in technology and afford criminals opportunities to victimise our citizens.

Novel forms of high-tech crime and global communications require innovative approaches. Traditional concepts of cooperation need to be revisited in order to enhance international action. We need to identify solutions that will protect our citizens and support global communications and commerce.

Canada is involved in ongoing discussions within the Council of Europe to elaborate a legal instrument to deal with transborder computer crime. We are pleased to see the progress that is being achieved. We have also been involved in initiatives in the Organization of American States and the Commonwealth.

Canada believes, though, that education, training and information exchange regarding high-tech crimes should be an early priority for the U.N.

Corruption is a challenge that no country can ignore. We must address it, taking into account its many facets. Canada, therefore, supports the negotiation of a global instrument against corruption.

In addition, Canada would also encourage the criminalization of corruption as a predicate offence in the context of money laundering and the possession of the proceeds of crime.

Money laundering is a key part of the organized crime cycle and used by criminals to hide illegal conduct, while assuming a guise of respectability. As with high-tech crime, money laundering is also borderless and on the increase. Funds are moved quickly between countries, often through complex and legitimate channels to hide their illicit sources and ultimate beneficiaries. This threat must be met by all of us, working together.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, let me state that Canada continues to be committed to building international police and law enforcement partnerships. We encourage initiatives to make these links even stronger.

These partnerships will be active and highly focused. They will include joint operations targeting the upper echelons of transnational criminal organizations, as well as the exchange of both evidence and criminal intelligence on criminal groups. This partnership must also encourage initiatives designed to prevent crime.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that international cooperation is imperative. Indeed, only a collective approach will ensure that our global response to transnational crime is better organized than the criminal groups themselves.

Thank you.

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